

Inclusive Health: Intentional Inclusion of People with ID



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People with intellectual disabilities (ID) are one of the most medically underserved populations. Due to a range of systemic challenges, they have less access to quality health care and health promotion programs. As a result, people with ID experience dramatically higher rates of preventable disease, chronic pain and suffering, and premature death¹. While there have been improvements over the years, the fact remains that people with ID still face significant health disparities not associated with their disabilities.

Intentional Inclusion

Organizations across the public health system can take action to decrease these health disparities by removing barriers and improving access to health services for people with ID. The inclusion of people with ID in existing health programs is an effective way of improving their health. Inclusion is more than simply having a person with ID in the same room; **intentional inclusion** is a deliberate effort, and should start as the project/activity/event is developed.

Intentional inclusion means including people with ID as part of the planning, implementation, and decision-making process. It also means valuing the input, perspectives, and roles that people with ID bring to the effort. Finally, intentional inclusion means making sure organizations have both procedures and practices in place to support and promote inclusion.

Getting Started

Below are some tips for taking the first steps to becoming inclusive of people with ID. You can find more tips and details in the [Inclusive Health Principles and Strategies](#) resource.

1. Ensure your **programs** and **physical spaces** are accessible and welcoming to people with ID. This includes providing necessary accommodations such as sensory supports, ensuring staff are available to assist with questions, and building in additional time for meetings or preparation. Another important part of creating a welcoming space is learning disability etiquette, such as directly addressing the person with ID, not his/her caretaker.
2. Ensure your **communications**, including written and spoken language, materials, and interactions with the community are accessible to people with ID. This includes avoiding jargon and abstract statements and writing program materials in plain language, at no more than a sixth grade reading level.
3. Provide **training** to your staff on the barriers and challenges faced by people with ID, including how to remove barriers. This includes partnering with local disability organizations and hiring people with ID to conduct, advise, or participate in the training.

¹ Krahn, G. L., Hammond, L., & Turner, A. (2006). A cascade of disparities: health and health care access for people with intellectual disabilities. *Mental retardation and developmental disabilities research reviews*, 12(1), 70-82.

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4. Take steps to change organizational culture to value and understand inclusion. This includes incorporating disability, including ID, into organizational policies, statements, or missions, especially diversity statements. This will lead to **sustainable inclusion**.

How do I connect with people with ID?

Across the United States, there are many self-advocate organizations and organizations that work with people with ID. Explore these organizations to connect with people with ID in your community.

Self-Advocate Organizations:

1. [Autistic Self Advocacy Network](#)
2. [Centers on Independent Living](#)
3. [Self Advocates Becoming Empowered](#)
4. [Self-Advocacy Online](#)
5. [People First](#)
6. [Best Buddies](#)

Organizations That Work With People With ID:

1. [The Arc](#)
2. [L'Arche USA](#)
3. [Autism Society](#)
4. [Easter Seals](#)
5. [National Association of Councils on Developmental Disabilities \(NACDD\)](#)
6. [Special Olympics Programs](#)
7. [University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities \(UCEDDs\)](#)

Additional Resources

Below are some cross-disability resources to provide additional information on how to be inclusive.

- American Association on Health and Disability (AAHD). [Disability Etiquette – Tips for Interacting with People with Disabilities](#)
- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. [Communicating With and About People with Disabilities](#)
- Disability in Public Health. [Including People with Disabilities: Public Health Workforce Competencies](#)
- National Association of County & City Health Officials, June 2017, [Five Steps for Inclusive Health Promotion](#)
- National Association of County & City Health Officials, June 2014, [Strategies for Successfully Including People with Disabilities](#)

This resource was created in partnership with the Association of University Centers on Disabilities.

For more resources on inclusion, please visit the Center for Inclusive Health at inclusivehealthcenter.org.

Questions? We are happy to help. Please email inclusivehealth@specialolympics.org